

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Approximately \$16.3 million in federal grant funding will be coming to California to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Congressman Jim Costa (D-Fresno) helped to fight for increased specialty crop funding during the Farm Bill debate in 2008. California received more than four times the amount of the next highest state.

“These funds are a triple win for our state, our agriculture industry and our local economy,” Costa said. “Our Valley leads the nation in growing crops like almonds, peaches, and table grapes. Anything we can do which will expand and improve specialty crop production and sales benefits our farms, farm workers and farm communities.”

Through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, USDA works to increase child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops; improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems; assisting all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain in developing Good Agricultural, Good Handling and Good Manufacturing practices; investing in specialty crop research; enhancing food safety; developing new and improved specialty crop varieties; eradicating pest and plant health issues; and fostering organic and sustainable production practices.